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A LETTER TO R---- B---- Esq;

AUTHOR of the

NEW COMEDY

CALLED

THE WISHES:

Now in Rehearsal at the

Theatre Royal in *Drury-Lane.*

LONDON:

Printed for M. Cooper in Pater-noster-Row. 1761.

[Price Six Pence.]

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

A

LETTER

TO

R---- B---- Esq;

SIR,

IT was not many Days ago that I wrote you a Letter upon the Subject of your Comedy now upon the point of being acted at *Drury-lane* Theatre. As I had Reasons for not dis-

cloſing myſelf, I did not ſubſcribe my Name to it; my Counſel of courſe was deſpiſed. However, I am not one of thoſe anonymous Letter-Writers, who are to be diſcouraged by one Rebuff; for as my Motive, contrary to the Uſage of my Fraternity, was a good one, and had your Benefit in view, I ſhall for your ſake perſiſt in it, and addreſs you now in a more earneſt and more public manner, than in my laſt.

Your Piece was laſt Winter put into my Hands by a Friend, without any Account whence he came by it. I read it through more than once, and it was upon my own Knowledge of it that I gave you my Advice not to produce it at our Summer Theatre; at the ſame

time

time wiſhing you to reſerve it till the Winter, when it might be ſecure of a better Repreſentation. This I ſaid, not in the leaſt doubting but that the Manager of either Theatre would accept it gladly and without Heſitation. Since then to my inconceivable Surprize I have been informed that it was offered and refuſed at both Theatres. This accounts for the manner in which I got a ſight of it; for it is plain, while it ought to have been in the Hands of its reſpectable Judges Mr. *** and Mr. *** it migrated into thoſe of other People, who have no manner of Connection with them.

I confeſs to you, Sir, I was never more ſurprized in my Life than when I heard this

this Account. My Surprize however carried an Exception to it in the Perſon of Mr. * * *; for I might have conſidered that as he has long been in poſſeſſion of the firſt Name for thoſe agile Performances in which our mute Harlequin excells, it was not at all likely he ſhould countenance any Invaſion upon his Merit. The dangerous Tendency of this Innovation might juſtly alarm him, leſt all that illuſtrious Collection of Birds and Beaſts, Witches and Wire-Dancers, of which he enjoys the ineſtimable Poſſeſſion, might be rendered uſeleſs and contemptible; and in the end the Performances of the Head (contrary to all Cuſtom and Uſage) be made of more Dignity than the Operations of the Heels. This Inverſion of things I might have thought

thought that experienced Practitioner could never approve of; and indeed how you or your Friends could think of tendering a Piece to him of ſuch a Nature I can't well conceive.

But that any one who profeſſes himſelf a man of Taſte, a Lover of the Belles Lettres, a ſovereign Critic in Dramatic Performances, and one who is himſelf a Dabbler in the Buſineſs, ſhould ſo far forget himſelf, as to reject a Work of ſo much Wit and Ingenuity, ſo much Novelty, and ſuch inimitable Raillery, ſtaggered me beyond meaſure, and I was led almoſt to think I had miſtaken its Merit, and formed too favorable an Opinion of it. While I was thus wavering, and almoſt upon the Point of receding

receding from my Opinion; I received ſuch a Confirmation of my Judgment, by the Reception it had met with from ſome of the moſt celebrated Wits of the Age, as put an End to my Doubts at once, and left me at a loſs what Motive to aſcribe its Rejection to. That it ſhould ſpring from Want of Taſte and Diſcernment I was loth to believe; that Jealouſy or Want of Candor was the Cauſe, I was ſtill inclined to think; eſpecially when I recollected what half-formed miſhapen Productions, that Gentleman had of late too frequently gave Birth to, with a Compliance, which although it carried the Appearance of Good Nature with it, certainly did no Credit to his Judgment. This Eaſineſs of Temper to Authors of leſs Merit, led

me

me to believe that there could be no Obſtacle to your Succeſs; and though I knew him abſolute in his Deciſions, I flattered myſelf he would be juſt. The Event convinced me of my Miſtake, and the Concluſions I draw from it are ſuch, as I never admit without Regret.

The Perſons, Sir, whom you have had the good Fortune to pleaſe, are ſuch, I underſtand, whoſe Names do honour not only to every one under their Protection, but to the Country to which they belong —nay, (if I am not miſ-informed) I may add a Name to the Liſt, a truly Royal one, whoſe Approbation I dare believe you eſteem above any earthly Favour or Enjoyment whatſoever; this Approbation I am told was accompanied with a

Liberality peculiar to himſelf, which though it could ſcarce enhance your Happineſs, I make no doubt increaſed his own. Thus diſtinguiſhed by the Applauſe as well as Bounty of your Sovereign, it would be ridiculous to ſuppoſe you any longer regret the Rejection you met with in your Application to the Theatre. If you received any thing like Mortification on that Occaſion, it is now reflected back upon him who occaſioned it, and who had not Taſte to diſcern that Merit, which your Sovereign was pleaſed to reward. The happy Æra is now commenced, which if any one alive has cauſe to regret, it can be he only whoſe Decrees are no longer abſolute, and whoſe Deciſions are now made liable to be reverſed; his Monopoly is deſtroy-

ed:

ed: Men of Wit and Genius have now a new Channel open to their Productions, and he who was before the ſupreme Cenſor of their Works, will now be reduced to his proper Profeſſion, and become the ſubſervient Inſtrument in the Repreſentation of them.

The Complaint that there are no Comedies wrote in this Age, does not in my Opinion reflect upon our Writers, but is the Conſequence of our Manners. There are no longer any glaring Characters amongſt us; modern Refinements have poliſhed away all thoſe humourous Peculiarities which ſupplied Topics of Ridicule to the Pens of *Shakeſpear*, *Johnſon* and *Fletcher*; even *Cibber*'s Beau no longer exiſts. Our Cotemporaries think

they have conjured up a freſh Spirit of Humour in the Paſſion of Jealouſy; it may be ſo; but it is no Mark of the Times; no body is jealous now-a-days; Thanks to the Wives of this Age, they prevent all that painful and excruciating Uncertainty which a more guarded Behaviour might occaſion. The Comic Writer is now left without Materials: even the Court, his never-failing Reſource for Invective, is now ſo formed, as to afford no Employment for his Pen, unleſs he ſteps out of his Office, and commences Panegyriſt. In this Dearth of Characters I think great Praiſe is due to you, Sir, who have attempted to introduce amongſt us theſe whimſical Recruits, and to tranſplant the Wit of *Italy* into your native Climate. I will not

venture to ſay your Attempt will ſucceed, and for theſe Reaſons, Firſt, becauſe Improvement is as hard to introduce in this Country, as Prejudice is found difficult to remove. Secondly, our Engliſh Harlequin being in general as great a Favourite with the Mob, as our Engliſh Punchinello is, I conclude that every Man who can jump through a Hoop himſelf, or who delights to ſee another do it, will ſet his Face againſt your Interloper. Thirdly, there being no Feats of Agility in your Piece, by which your Performers are put in manifeſt Danger of their Lives, I cannot ſee how it is poſſible the Galleries can ſet it out. Fourthly, and laſtly; from its being admired by all People who have Taſte, and the Oppoſition it has received from

thoſe

thoſe who have none, I conclude it will be damned by a very great Majority.

If in reply to theſe Suggeſtions of mine you remind me of the very powerful Protection under which you are ſheltered, I muſt acquaint you that for that very Reaſon every free-born Engliſhman who loves to diſappoint and inſult his Betters, will be your declared Enemy and Oppoſer. If you object to this, that your End is anſwered, that happy in the Approbation you have already obtained, you are above the Cenſure of the Vulgar and indifferent to their Praiſe, I think you judge right; and am,

SIR,

Your's, &c.

THE END.